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A PROCESS FOR THE IN SITU EXTRACTION OF OIL FROM SHALE BEDS AND
SIMILAR FORMATIONS

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The present invention refers to a way of extracting oil from shale rock and similar beds in situ by means of channels which cut through the shale strata, are supplied with heat for the heating of the shale bed, and which are separated from the outlet boreholes formed in the shale by means of shale rock sections in between. The object of the invention is to achieve an improvement of this established procedure, in particular with regard to the quality and composition of the extracted products, which is essentially obtained by embedding heating elements which are preferably heated electrically, in heating boreholes, and which have smaller cross sections than the cross sections of the boreholes and by introducing into the interspace between the channel wall and the heating element thus obtained a filling that transfers heat from the heating element and the shale and simultaneously counteracts or prevents, respectively, a flow of the oil products gasified from the shale in the direction towards and along the heating element.

The invention will be more thoroughly described below with reference to the modes of implementation as shown in examples illustrated in the enclosed figure, and other accompanying characteristics of the invention which will also be discussed.

Figure 1 illustrates a section through a part of shale bed, in which the arrangement of a heating element installed according to the invention for the accomplishment of the process is shown. A vertical section through a rock formation according to a modified design is shown in Figure 2, and a flat view of this latter design is in Figure 3.

In a shale bed, 2, vertical channels, 4 in Figure 1 and 9 in Figures 2 and 3, are drilled, in which heating elements are embedded. These can consist of coiled pipe 44 according to Figure 1, equipped with inlet 32 and outlet 36 for a hot medium, gas or steam, which then remains separated from the surroundings during its passage through the coiled pipe 44. The pipe 44 can in addition be designed as an electrical resistor and function both for the fluid conduction of the medium mentioned and for the development of heat accompanying an electric current. With the design according to Figure 2 an electric heating element 17 is used. After the heating element has been inserted the channels are filled with backing sand a malleable substance, respectively, such as cement, clay or other suitable filler. The channels can be closed at the upper ends by collars 21, 28 which must necessarily be cemented into the rock foundation. On top of the shale bed 2 there is often an overlying stratum of lime 47 (Figure 2) with a thickness of several meters. Then the electrical resistance is only active within that portion of hole 9, which is surrounded by the oil-bearing shale. In other words, the electric current at the level of the lime layer is conducted through low resistance wires and therefore thermoelectric heat is not developed here to an appreciable extent.

Besides the channels mentioned above, exhaust holes 8 according to Figures 2 and 3 are made in the shale bed, through which the

products formed during the dry distillation [carbonization] are evacuated, and which consequently do not contain any heating element. These exhaust holes 8, which are sealed from the limestone at the top by collar 27, are connected through ducts 52 to a condenser which is best cooled by either air or cooling water.


At the surface expanse of the shale bed, channels 9 and 8, respectively, are arranged in such a way, as exemplified in Figure 3, that a heat-supplying channel 9 is surrounded by a number of exhaust holes 8. It is particularly advantageous to carry out the heating of the shale bed so that a wave of heat is transmitted horizontally through the shale bed, for example in the direction from the line of holes 40 in Figure 3 towards the line of holes 41 through a successive connection of the heating elements. "When this heat wave in part of the shale bed reaches a temperature of about 300°C, or prior to this, the shale begins to release combustible gases which in part are condensable and in part not condensable and which are conveyed to a condenser, common to a plurality of channels 8 which separates the former from the latter." The incondensable gases can be used, for example, for the preheating and heating, respectively, of a new zone of the shale bed with an arrangement as depicted in Figure 1. The duration of the degasification periods may be adjusted to the desired degree, by such variables as the distance between the holes, which can be, for example, 1/2 to 2 meters. The maximum temperature of the mentioned heat wave can amount to approximately 500°.

The hydrocarbons formed during the distillation process in the shale rock include condensable products from the lightest petroleum [gasoline] to the heaviest oil. Because the heating channels according to the invention are filled, the result is that the hydrocarbons are driven in the direction of the outlet channels 8, and thus away from the hot heating elements. Otherwise, of course, the hydrocarbons would find their way to these elements to a large extent, especially in the lower part of the shale layer because of the high rock pressure prevailing there. The extraordinary

advantage is thus gained that an unwanted cracking of the oil products is essentially avoided. The heating method according to the invention therefore allows recovery of a considerably greater percentage of high-grade gasoline products than with presently familiar methods.

While a shale bed section is being supplied with heat, an expansion of the shale sets in, at least in the beginning, in the longitudinal direction of the heat supply channels, and thus in such a direction as to cross the shale layers. If a number of such channels are simultaneously heated then these create within the shale mass static pillars of heat with a greater height than that of the colder shale mass located in between them. This shale mass therefore becomes affected by forces directed in a vertical direction, the effect of which is to separate the different strata of shale from one another, so that the combined vertical displacement of these plus the gaps formed between the strata of shale approach a configuration that corresponds to the shale layer at its highest temperature around the heated channels. In a cross section the shale layer assumes the appearance shown schematically in Figure 2. On the other hand the shale layer within zones 54 limited by the dotted lines 53 in Figure 3 of the shale mass shows a falling temperature from the holes 9 to the holes 8, and within the resulting temperature differences the degasification can be considered to continue at different temperatures, for example from 300° to 500°. A certain molecule which is released from the shale mass at point 39 during the dry distillation process will on its way from this point to the outlet hole 8 pass through temperature zones of lower temperatures than that existing at point 39.

The pipe system shown in Figure 1 can be used for different heating purposes by allowing the existing channel in a previously degassed hot zone of the shale bed to conduct a fluid stream by means of pipes laid on the ground. Air, water, steam or other fluids which are heated in the process may then be led to a channel in a shale bed zone where the oil extraction is to be started or is already in progress.



After the rock mass has been degassed, it wholly or partially consists of what is called shale coke, which indicates that after the gases are driven off, combustible carbon remains in the shale. According to the invention the rock mass can be ignited before or after cooling and the residual shale coke can be oxidized to shale ashes by introducing combustion air to the existing channel system. A very slow combustion that persists for several years can in this manner remain in progress, and the heat thereby generated can be utilized for various purposes, such as the heating of shale rock and hot water for homes, steam production, cultivation of plants, etc. According to the invention the cultivation of plants can also be carried out directly on the shale rock and in this way utilize the heat stored in the rock for a great many years.

Patent claims:

1. A process for in situ recovery of oil from shale beds and similar rock layers by means of channels that penetrate the shale strata, and are supplied with heat for the heating of the shale mass and which are separated from the exhaust holes formed in the shale by means of shale bed sections in between, characterized by heating elements being embedded in the heating channels, which are preferably heated electrically, and which have smaller cross sections than the cross sections of these channels, such that the interspace thus obtained between the channel wall and the heating element may be provided with backing sand that transfers heat from the heating element to the shale and simultaneously counteracts or prevents, respectively, the flow of oil products gasified from the shale in the direction towards and along the heating elements.
2. A process according to claim 1, characterized by the interspace being filled with a cast compound.
3. A process according to claims 1 or 2, characterized by the fact that a heating element in the form of a pipeline is brought

down into the heating channels, and the inner part of the pipeline, through which is led a hot medium, is entirely separated from the channel and that the heat supply to the pipeline is also produced electrically.

4. A process according to one of the previous claims, characterized by the fact that the channel system made in the shale bed is utilized for regenerative heating of the rock mass in which channels in a previously degassed hot zone of the shale bed are connected with pipelines over the ground and are allowed to conduct a medium which is heated in this zone, and also characterized by the fact that channels in an untreated zone of the shale rock are directly or indirectly supplied with energy utilized in this manner from the previously mentioned zone.

5. A process according to one of the previous claims, characterized by the shale coke remaining in the shale rock after the degasification is combusted to produce shale ashes by introducing air into the available system of channels.

FIG. 1

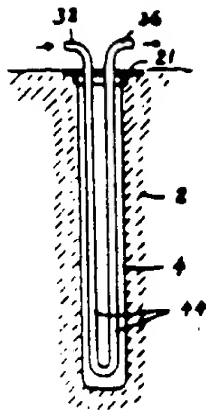
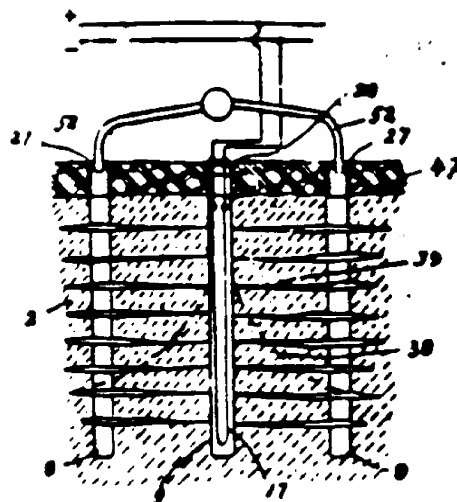
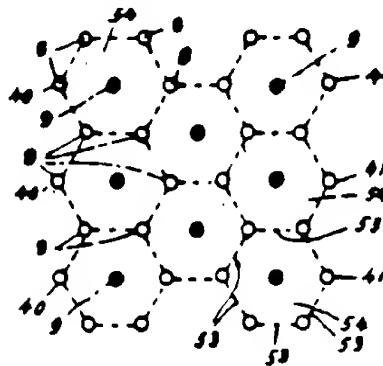


FIG. 2



SW. 121.737

FIG. 3



BESKRIVNING
OFFENTLIGGJORD AV KUNGL
PATENT- OCH REGISTRERINGSVERKET



BEVILJAT DEN 1 APRIL 1948
PATENTID FRÅN DEN 18 OKT 1940
PUBLICERAT DEN 25 MAR 1948

Ans. den " " 1930 nr 5195 1940

Harbills en ritning

SVENSKA SKIFFERBERG AKTIEFÖLAGE, ÖREBRO
Sätt att utvinna olja ur skifferberg och dylikt in situ.

Uppfinnare: E. Ljungström

Foreliggande uppfinning handlar sig till ett sätt att utvinna olja ur skifferberg och dylikt in situ medelst skifferlagren skärande kanaler, vilka tillföras värme för uppvärmning av skiffermassan och vilka äro skilda från i skiffern utformade avloppskanaler medelst mellanliggande partier av skifferberget. Uppfinningen öfver ett åstadkomma en förhållning af denna kända metod speciellt i afseende på de utvinna produkternas beskaffenhet och sammansättning, vilket väsentligen emåås därigenom, att i uppvärmningskanalerna nedföras varmeelement, vilka fördradessvis uppvärms på elektrisk väg, och vilka hvarjundre tvärsektionsarean af dessa kanalers tvärsektionsarean och att i det så erhållna mellanrummet mellan kanalväggen och varmeelementet anbringas en tyllmassa, som förmedlar värmeövergång mellan varmeelementet och skiffern och samtidigt motverkar resp. förhindrar en strömning af de ur skiffern fördrasade oljeprodukterna i riktning mot och längs utmed varmeelementet.

Uppfinningen skall nedan närmare beskrivas under hänvisning till a bifogade ritning som exempel visade utföringsformer af densamma, varvid även andra uppfinningen kännetecknande egenskaper skola angrävas.

I fig. 1 visas en sektion genom ett parti af ett skifferberg, i vilket är anbragt ett för satslets genomförande enligt uppfinningen anordnat varmeelement 1. I fig. 2 visas en vertikalsektion genom ett bergparti enligt en modifierad utföringsform och fig. 3 en planvy af denna senare utföringsform.

I ett skifferberg 2 äro nedborrade vertikala kanaler, i fig. 1 betecknade med 1 och i fig. 2 och 3 med 9, i vilka varmeelement anbringas. Dessa kunna utgöras af en rörslunga 11 enligt fig. 1, försedd med inlag 32 och avlopp 46 för ett hett medium, gas eller ånga, som därvid under sin passage genom rörslungan 44 är skildt från omgivningen. Röret 44 kan därjämte vara utformat som elektriskt motstånd och fungera såväl för genomströmning af det nämnda mediet som för överhettande af värme genom elektrisk ström. Vid utföringsformen enligt fig. 2 användes ett elektriskt

varmeelement 17. Sedan varmeelementet nedförts, utfyllas kanalerna med en massa resp. gjutmassa, såsom cement, ler eller dylikt. Kanalerna kunna uppbåda vara 10 st. i ett berggrunden. Öfver på skifferberget 2 är anordnad ett källlager 47. I fig. 2 är en maktighet af många meter, varvid det elektriska motståndet endast är verksamt i den del af hulen 9, som är utrymme af oljeförande skiffern. Den elektriska strömmen tillföres alltså motståndet genom ledningar, som i nya med källlagret 47 är förlädd och därför har icke någon annan nämnd utsträckning.

Förutom de ovan nämnda kanaler och uppvärmningskanaler 8 enligt fig. 2 och 3 i skifferberget, genom vilka de vid fördrastillfällena fördrasade produkterna avledas, och vilka äro i icke närmare någon uppvärmning anordning. Dessa kanaler 8, som uppbåda vara 10 st. i ett berggrunden, äro i fig. 2 och 3 förbundna med en kändesluga, vilken i sin längd kan vara fullfylld af en vätska, såväl af kyvatten.

I utsträckningen af det skiffert 2 i fig. 1 skall avverkas anbringas kanaler 2 i fig. 8. I ex. på sätt som framgår af fig. 2, 3 och 4 en varmetillförselkanal 30 omges af ett avloppskanaler 8. Det är särskilt förklarligt att genomföra skifferbergets uppvärmning så att en väg af värme horisontellt förpassas genom skifferberget, i ex. i riktning från hulen 40 i fig. 3 mot hulen 41 genom successivt inkoppling af varmeelementen. När denna värmevägs i ett parti af skifferberget nått en temperatur af omkring 300° eller högre, börjar skiffern afgiva betydbara gaser, som dels äro kondenserbara dels okondenserbara och som inledas i en för ett del af kanaler 8 gemensam kondensor, som avskiljer de bara från de senare. De okondenserbara gaserna kunna i ex. användas för för resp. uppvärmning af en vätska af skifferberget vid utföringsformen enligt fig. 1. Avgasningsperiodens tidslängd varierar i onskad grad, bl. a. sammanhängande med det mellan hulen valda avståndet, som i ex. kan vara 100 m.

FIG 1

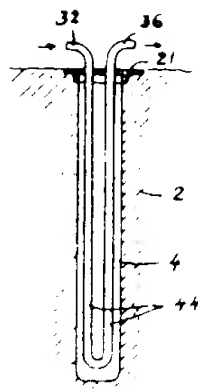
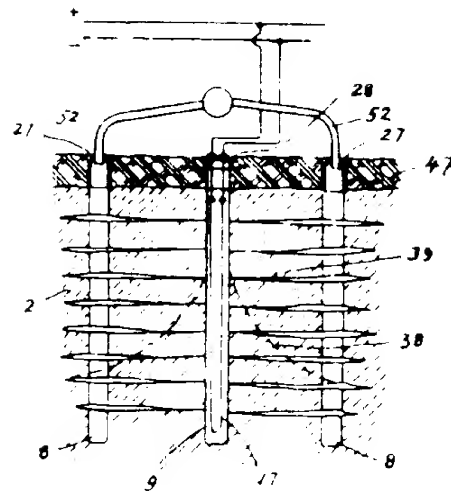
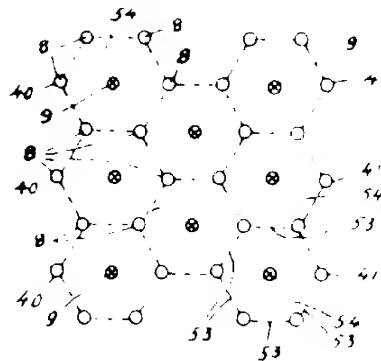


FIG 2



SW. 121.737

FIG 3



Swedish specification 121 737

Translation; page 1, second column, 3rd paragraph,
lines 10-17.

"When this heat wave in part of the shale rock reaches a temperature of about 500°C , or prior to this, the shale begins to give off combustible gases which in part are condensable and in part not condensable and which are conveyed to a condenser common to a plurality of channels which condenser separates the former from the latter."